THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL SPRING/SUMMER 2015

THE WILD CASCADES ■ Spring/Summer 2015

FRONT: Waterfalls tumble down Silver Tip Peak to feed the South Fork Sauk River via Weeden Creek. Monte Cristo peaks beyond. May 29, 2015.
—TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

The Wild Cascades

Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council

EDITOR: Anne Basye

EDITOR EMERITUS: Betty Manning

EDITORIAL BOARD: Philip Fenner, Anders Forsgaard, Tom Hammond, and Rick McGuire

Printing by Abracadabra Printing | Pat Hutson, Designer

The Wild Cascades is published three times a year (Winter, Spring/Summer, Fall).

Letters, comments, and articles are invited, subject to editorial review.

The Wild Cascades Editor
wildcascades@northcascades.org
North Cascades Conservation Council
PO Box 95980, University Station, Seattle, WA 98145-2980

***The Wild Cascades* is printed on recycled paper.**

THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL was formed in 1957 "To protect and preserve the North Cascades' scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, and wilderness values." Continuing this mission, NCCC keeps government officials, environmental organizations, and the general public informed about issues affecting the Greater North Cascades Ecosystem. Action is pursued through administrative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the past half century NCCC has led or participated in campaigns to create the North Cascades National Park Complex, Glacier Peak Wilderness, and other units of the National Wilderness System from the W.O. Douglas Wilderness north to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness, the Wild Sky Wilderness and others. Among its most dramatic victories has been working with British Columbia allies to block the raising of Ross Dam, which would have drowned Big Beaver Valley.

NCCC is supported by member dues and private donations. These contributions support the full range of the Council's activities, including publication of *The Wild Cascades*. As a 501(c)(3) organization, all contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Membership dues for one year are: Living Lightly/Student $10; Individual $30; Family $50; Sustaining $100.

North Cascades Conservation Council
P.O. Box 95980
University Station
Seattle, WA 98145-2980

NCCC Website
www.northcascades.org

NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Founded in 1957
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

The President's Report Spring/Summer 2015

"Standing on the shoulders of Giants" is a phrase I associate with human spaceflight, as it was used by astronauts and mission controllers in our quest to land humans on the moon, and return them safely to the Earth.

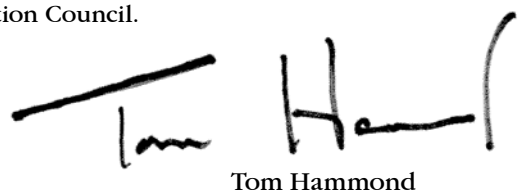
As the new NCCC president, I really am standing on the shoulders of giants—from the Zaleskys to the Mannings; from the Goldsworthys to the Dyers, and all of the board members, and indeed, members of the NCCC past and present. I am aware of the deep and rich history of the NCCC, and will endeavor to uphold the integrity and purposefulness of this organization. We're here not to make money or gain fame; we're here to protect one of the most amazing landscapes on Planet Earth.

A native of Washington, my personal connection with the North Cascades began in June of 1983 with a climb of Del Campo peak (see page 10). Since then, I have summited more than 70 times in the North Cascades, and I've come to find that being in a place, experiencing and understanding the landscape is far more rewarding than getting to the top of a mountain. More important, I became aware early on that there was no balance to the land use, with an emphasis on resource extraction. I was shocked to find roads and clearcuts right up to the headwaters of nearly every drainage. Where there wasn't timber extraction, there were mining tailings continuing to pollute streams and rivers. It was no mystery to me why salmon runs were declining. Thus, through direct exposure and experience with the landscape, I became an active conservationist.

I believe one of our biggest challenges is getting people aware of and engaged in understanding, exploring and caring for our North Cascades. Too often people think of the North Cascades as something distant—apart from us—when in reality those mountains literally provide for our lives and livelihoods in the most direct sense. From the rivers that power our modern lives to the food we eat, from the fruit orchards to fisheries and recreation, we are inextricably linked to our Cascades.

In this era of "smart" phones and virtual reality, we must get people to participate in the physical world, the one with real consequences for actions and inactions. I used to assume North Cascades National Park, the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area and similar protected lands came about through common sense—I took for granted these protected lands as "the way things are".

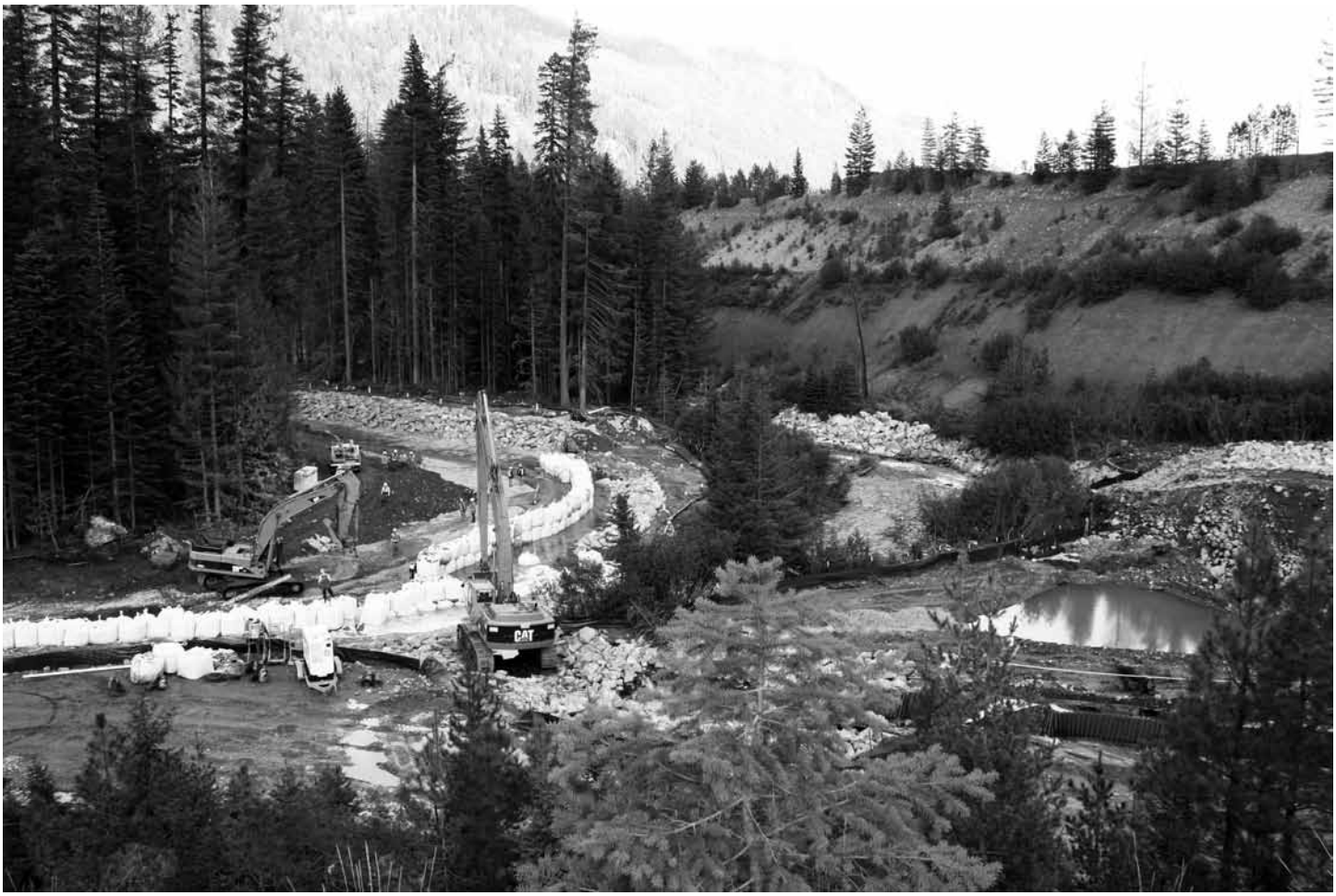
Thanks to the NCCC, I have come to find these glorious places are protected though incredibly hard work, dedication and perseverance by people just like you and me. I must admit I am a bit daunted by the prospect of following in the footsteps of all of the conservation greats who have been a part of the NCCC, but I take this presidency very seriously and will do everything in my power to continue the NCCC's focus on preservation of the landscape for the sake of all living things that depend on a healthy ecosystem. I am humbled and thankful for the opportunity to lead the North Cascades Conservation Council.



Tom Hammond

Monte Cristo count down

By Phil Fenner and Marc Bardsley



This 2013 photo shows Tailings Pile No. 1 at Holden Village—the biggest mine remediation project in the U.S. at the moment—being regraded in order to prepare the bed for the underground barrier wall. This scene might be considered a dystopian vision of remediation at other mining sites in the North Cascades, including Monte Cristo. PHOTO PROVIDED BY HOLDEN VILLAGE.

As a result of court actions a decade ago, the Forest Service in partnership with the Washington State Department of Ecology has been preparing a plan and constructing ancillary infrastructure to remove hazardous tailings from the area around the Monte Cristo town site. So far, an access road has been constructed bypassing much of the former County "Mine to Market Road", new and temporary bridges have been built using log stringers, a 3-acre repository for waste material has been constructed a few miles away from the town site, and technical studies have been performed.

Much of the work entails relocating hazardous waste from the vicinity of the old mines scattered throughout the area and from the concentrator at the town site. A small amount of the waste is considered "dangerous" and will be trucked to a toxic waste dump in Oregon. The remainder will be shuttled to the repository. Most of this waste can be accessed and moved by the heavy equipment near the town site; however some of the waste material is located just inside the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness Area. The plan is to remove the waste with heavy lift helicopters from the Wilderness area site directly to the repository. It appears this will require 80 flights per day for about three weeks. It is planned to have the project essentially completed before bad weather sets in this fall.

Perhaps the most serious issue that we, as conservationists, can have an impact upon is the disposition of the access road recently built. The U.S. Forest Service is responsible for monitoring the repository site for years to come and needs the road, it seems, to do that. There is also the issue of private property in the Monte Cristo town site area. The Forest Service has indicated that a "NEPA Process" will be conducted to determine how to handle the many issues resulting from all the activity to clean up the Monte Cristo area. Get ready for a noisy summer if you are visiting that part of the North Cascades.

NCCC would prefer that the new road be gated and locked to all but USFS and inholder vehicles at Barlow Pass, as was the old road, during and after project completion. We will engage with the coming USFS evaluation of alternatives per NEPA, advocating for the restoration of the natural character of the areas subjected to remediation.

Overpopulation here at home

By Bruce Barnbaum

The issue of human overpopulation has been discussed—and shunted aside throughout the world—for decades. Those of us who recognize the severe impacts of over 7 billion human beings inhabiting this small planet at one time cannot let this overriding issue be overlooked.

We know that the oceans are being grotesquely overfished to supply food for the growing number (and volume) of human stomachs. We know that forests worldwide are being cut down to create more farmlands, grazing lands and cooking oil plantations, all for increasing human consumption.

We also know that soon even the relatively pristine—although rapidly melting—Arctic Ocean is doomed to suffer a huge, catastrophic toxic oil spill in order to meet humanity's insatiable appetite for energy. It matters little that burning the fossil fuels it contains will continue to warm our planet, ultimately harming and displacing much of life on earth by adding to atmospheric CO_2.

These are just a few of the long list of planetary insults integrally related to human overpopulation.

One of the problems in addressing this issue is the difficulty in picturing what we're doing to our planet with our exploding numbers. It's impossible to visualize the loss of fish in our oceans (especially when the supermarkets still seem to be filled with fish). Few of us have ever seen the effects of a huge oil spill, so it's mostly a case of "out of sight, out of mind." The old phrase "seeing is believing" holds true, and if we don't see it, most people simply don't believe it. Or, if they believe it, they deem it too far away and meaningless to really catch their attention.

But maybe, if we can directly visualize an aspect of human overpopulation, it can have an effect. The photograph accompanying this article was made from the window of a commercial jetliner shortly after take-off from Seatac Airport. It graphically shows the incursion of new residential developments southeast of Seattle into the forests of our foothills. More and more people need more and more housing… and therefore fewer and fewer trees. But trees are important, and we need to recognize that fact.

We know that trees are the lungs of the earth, providing the oxygen needed by virtually all living creatures, including humans. But trees are necessary for a variety of other reasons. They purify the air. They purify the water. They hold back run-off from heavy rains, thus ameliorating flash floods during heavy storm events and helping prevent landslides under such conditions. They provide habitat for scores of birds and animals, plus fish that need waters cooled by the shade of those trees to remain cool and pure. Trees also provide immense beauty. But the problem is that none of these benefits bring in any money; rather, only when a tree is cut down does it have any monetary value. So cutting them down has benefits for some that a standing tree—or forest—cannot match.

In the accompanying photograph we see that as more housing was needed, trees have been cut down to make way for the housing. This is an overpopulation problem, and it's happening right under our noses. We need to recognize it, along with the fact that virtually all of urbanized Puget Sound was once old-growth forest. So when we see the tall downtown skyscrapers, the residential areas, the shopping centers and the sprawling parking lots, we should recognize that all this was once forested land. Overpopulation has turned it into what it is now…and where it is headed in the future.

NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Founded in 1937
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Post Office Box 95980, University Station
Seattle, Washington 98145-1980

May 26, 2015

Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director, National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240
jon_jarvis@nps.gov

RE: Upper Stehekin River Road

Dear Director Jarvis,

The North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC) was founded in 1957, and our mission is to protect and preserve the scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, and wilderness values of the North Cascades. In our first decade NCCC worked tirelessly to establish the North Cascades National Park (NOCA) and we remain committed to the integrity of the Park and the Stephen Mather Wilderness, which comprises 93% of the Park.

NCCC strongly supports the Park Service's decision to close the Stehekin River Valley Road at Car Wash Falls, milepost 12.9, following the 2003 flood. The environmental damage, the low usage and financial cost do not justify rebuilding or rerouting the road.

The upper portion of the road, above Glory, has been under the river since 1995. When the flood in 2003 washed out the Upper Stehekin River Road at Car Wash Falls, Milepost 12.9, NCCC supported Alternative B, abandonment of the Upper Road, as the preferred Alternative in the March 2006 Environmental Assessment. NCCC believes that the Park Service reached the appropriate resolution to close the Upper Stehekin River Valley Road at Car Wash Falls. The Park Service decision is bolstered by facts on the ground, as the flood of 2006 demonstrated. In 2014 the U.S. Congress passed the National Defence Authorization Act with a rider to allow the Park Service to relocate the Wilderness Boundary in order to build a rerouted road by-pass around the washout and other river obstructions along the old road alignment.

Construction of the Upper Stehekin River Road on a new alignment will be both expensive and will provide little benefit. The Stehekin valley is isolated and remote; no roads lead there and there are only a few private automobiles in Stehekin Village. The only vehicle to use the new road would be a shuttle bus operated either by the Park Service or a concession. The Park Service's records show that within a couple of years after the washout and closure of the road, foot traffic in the Upper Stehekin River Valley returned to and exceeded pre-washout levels of visitation. This clearly indicates that a road is not needed in the upper valley

In 2012 the Washington Trails Association, a statewide hiker's organization, evaluated reopening or rerouting the Upper Stehekin River Road in its *State of Access Repor*t, pages 17 & 18, and reached the conclusion that because of low usage and very expensive construction reopening the road is not justified. The road should remain closed.

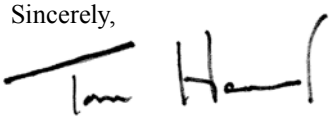
In addition, the proposed rerouting of the road around the washout at Car Wash Falls would require relocation of a segment of the Pacific Crest Trail. Rerouting the road along the old wagon road, the

current trail, will be environmentally damaging and may destroy a grove of old cedar trees.

Although The Park Service now has the authority to adjust the Wilderness Boundary to relocate the road, nothing on the ground has changed since the Record of Decision was issued and was confirmed by a Finding of No Significant Impact in 2009. The Stehekin Valley remains remote and isolated; visitation to the upper valley has returned to pre-washout levels; relocation or rerouting of the road in the upper valley will probably be even more expensive now than the 2006 estimates. In order to utilize a new road the NOCA would have to either operate or subsidize a shuttle bus service. We believe that the Park Service's limited budget should be spent to provide services to more visitors than the few who would be served by this very expensive road.

NCCC urges the Park Service to resist the calls to waste limited resources to satisfy the unrealistic desires of a few. We fully support the continued decision for the road to remain closed at Car Wash Falls.

Sincerely,



Tom Hammond, President
North Cascades Conservation Council

cc: Senator Maria Cantwell
Senator Patty Murray
Representative Suzan DelBene
Representative David Reichert
Chip Jenkins, Deputy Regional Director, NPS, chip_jenkins@nps.gov
Karen Taylor-Goodrich, Superintendent, NOCA, karen_taylor-goodrich@nps.gov

Attachments:
WTA, *State of Access,* 2012, pages 16 & 17
TWC, Winter 2015, pages 14, 15 & 23

Park Service helicopters confirmed in Mather Wilderness this summer

By Phil Fenner

Cover graphic from an obscure but fascinating book called Cry Crisis *by Harvey Manning and Ken Brower, about the Alaska pipeline (published by Friends of the Earth, 1974).*

Watch for helicopters this summer, as the National Park Service may use them to finish re-routing part of the Sahale Arm trail above Cascade Pass, a project begun last summer.

An NCCC member who encountered helicopters there last summer was incensed, filed an official complaint with the Park, and notified us so we could investigate. NCCC wrote letters and held meetings with North Cascades National Park officials to convey our objections to the use of these aircraft within Stephen Mather Wilderness, where mechanized equipment is prohibited (see prior two issues of *TWC*). The Park Service had used a "Categorical Exclusion" in their internal documents to obscure the action from public notice, which we objected to strenuously.

On June 25, a North Cascades National Park official told us they would be working in the Park Creek and Copper Ridge areas using helicopter support inside Stephen Mather Wilderness on July 1, confirming our suspicions that helicopters are being used in Wilderness without public review at other locations besides Sahale Arm.

With little public notice last summer—just a few signs posted at trailheads—we recommend that if you're planning a trip in these areas, check our blog for updates and call the Park Wilderness Info Center, (360) 854-7245, to ask about possible helicopters there if you want to avoid the noise. While you're talking with them, mention NCCC and tell them you hope they find quiet ways of getting the work done, and comply with the spirit of the Wilderness Act.

Meanwhile, let us know of any other mechanized activities you observe in our North Cascades Wilderness Areas—you are our eyes and ears! Email: ncccinfo@northcascades.org, thanks!

Chris Morgan: Yes, please, grizzly bears!

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Chris Morgan, ecologist and award-winning conservationist, educator, TV host and film producer, and co-founder of the Western Wildlife Outreach, recently filed an EIS statement in support of grizzly bear reintroduction.

Thank you to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for initiating this important process.

I emigrated to the USA in 1997. Part of the appeal of this amazing country is something that many people here take for granted - its WILDNESS. When I hike the mountains of my native home in the UK, there is something missing. Grizzly bears have not walked those hills for one thousand years. And with them went all sense of wildness. The window of opportunity to restore some of our wild planet has long been closed in most parts of the world. But it is different in Washington State. Here, the window is still open, and it is a moment in time we should grasp with pride and excitement. The grizzly bear will sit atop a suite of majestic carnivores that STILL call this home - wolves, lynx, mountain lions, black bears, wolverine….

But it's clear that the tiny number of grizzly bears thought to exist in the North Cascades can't recover without active help in the form of augmentation. The history of this most successful and historically widespread of the bear species shows that with a little support, recovery should be not only possible, but widely beneficial in so many ways. Their ecological and cultural roles are clear, but their economic, and spiritual roles should also be considered. Our future depends upon the types of wild places that grizzly bears represent.

I've been fortunate enough to work on bear research, education, and conservation projects all over the world for the last 25 years. In 1994 and 1995 I captured, radio-collared and tracked grizzly bears by foot for 2000 miles over 2 seasons in the Canadian Rockies, learning from them as I went. I only saw a handful. Since then I've spent thousands of hours among grizzly bears in Alaska, and I've been lucky enough to escort some wonderful people to enjoy them first hand.

But my proudest work has been here with the creation of the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project (now Western Wildlife Outreach). We have worked since 2001 to bring an accurate understanding about grizzly bears and recovery to local communities of the North Cascades - in close partnership with state and federal agencies, and with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. But most importantly, with local community members. And wherever we go we find a very high level of support for grizzly bear recovery. Our rigorous polls tell us that local people think bears are an essential component of the North Cascades ecosystem (81% agree), that they were here before humans and have an inherent right to live here (76% agree), that they should be preserved for future generations (86% agree). 79% said they support recovery. The vast majority STRONGLY agreed with these statements.

It's unfortunate that the vocal minority opposed to grizzly bear recovery muddies the water with inaccuracies and myth - something that the grizzly bear has faced since the days of Lewis and Clark. The economics also speak for themselves. Studies in Yellowstone have shown that people flock to the place to see grizzly bears - they are THE prime reward. The presence of grizzly bears there results in 155 local jobs and $10M per year injected into local communities. Research shows that people would pay even MORE than they already do to enter the park if they were guaranteed to see a griz.

My work as a TV host for PBS, BBC, National Geographic allows me the privilege of sharing the wonders of the wild with people, and the grizzly bear holds a special place in viewers' minds. Our films about them have held audiences of many millions captive all over the world. For good reason it seems. People find them irresistible and fascinating. In fact, it is VERY difficult for a reasonable person to argue that grizzly bears are a bad thing. The facts speak for themselves. But grizzly bears are wild animals, and CAN be dangerous - many people fear them for this reason. We should not shy from the truth, but merely place it in context, and treat people's opinions with respect and consideration.

I'm clearly an advocate for the wild, and for me the grizzly bear is the clearest manifestation of wilderness alive in the world today. But I'm also pragmatic and fair. Steps towards recovery have to be open, transparent, communicated well, inclusive, and with consideration for those who might be at first deny the benefits of bear recovery. Social science has proven that effective programs are based on fairness, familiarity, and control - when stakeholders feel that they are being treated fairly,

Continued on page 9

Grizzlies

Continued from page 9

have access to knowledge to increase familiarity, AND feel that they have a sense of control in matters, then much can be accomplished. Education and outreach should be given the highest possible priority as a result. Not just teaching passive audiences, but engaging active communities in the process - buy-in will be key, and will result in true benefits for all. Outreach can help stakeholders and communities move with the recovery process, checking off practical and emotional needs along the way like the need for information on safety and sanitation, ecology and behavior, and the recovery process itself. Time is on our side to do this right, and open communication is key.

But beyond the practical considerations, grizzly bears keep a part of us close to nature. They represent the things we all need - clean air, fresh water, intact natural resources. Like us, they are demanding - but they are also our best ally on a rapidly developing planet. The restoration of this unique grizzly bear population represents a golden opportunity for bears, for conservation, for our world. Let's show the rest of the world that this corner of the United States is ready to do something special, and huge for the natural world that we owe so much.

Whether we are ever lucky enough to see one or not, just knowing they are out there is a powerful tonic in a world that needs a little more nature. They teach us about ourselves, keep us humble, and are a part of our wild west heritage - perhaps THE most vivid part imaginable. If you don't believe me, just take a hike in the Scottish Highlands.

Chris Morgan, MS Ecology
Ecologist, Conservationist, bear specialist;
TV Host/Film Producer

Rainbow Falls, Stehekin.
—PHIL FENNER PHOTO

Return to Del Campo

By Tom Hammond

A shallow marine layer moves up the Sauk valley. —TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

2014 marked the 30th anniversary of my introduction to the North Cascades, and my first summit therein, on Del Campo Peak. Thanks to a New Englander named Kevin Keeley, that sunny, snowy late June weekend 31 years ago set the course for my life since then—a life of exploration, adventure and a quest to understand planetary science. It also started me on the course of organized conservation, since made manifest as a board member of the North Cascades Conservation Council.

I wanted to celebrate the anniversary with a return climb of Del Campo, but life events conspired to delay that visit. Then a unique and very special opportunity came up during a visit with friend and fellow NCCC board member Laura Zalesky. Would it be too morbid, said Laura, to ask you to take Phil's ashes to the North Cascades? I leaped out of my seat, exclaiming "Hell yeah I'll…..errr, I mean Heavens Yes, I'll do it." I assured Laura it would be one of the great honors of my life to take home one of NCCC's founders, and the reason that so many wild places remain wild in the state of Washington. After a few days of deliberation, it dawned on me that taking Phil to Del Campo would make a lot of sense—not just because it would be my anniversary climb, but because Laura and Phil lived on Del Campo Drive in Everett for 52 years! Laura thought the location perfect, so the plan was made.

A recurring theme that ran through my mind during the 50 hours I was on Del Campo peak in May was, "I don't remember it being so difficult." Naturally the mountain has gotten more difficult to hike and climb over the 31 years—it has nothing to do with me. The hike is actually quite lovely—after a couple of miles of forest hiking, one enters what I call "The Grotto"—the trail crosses a series of waterfalls cascading down Del Campo's cliffs. At a couple of points one literally hikes through the falls, clean cold water splashing the body and refreshing the soul. Combined with the lack of winter, and early onset of summer, dozens of species/hundreds of wild flowers lined the trail at each of the falls—a wonderful scene best experienced up close and personal. From that point on, the trail is more of a climb,

humping over and up exposed rock. It took me nearly 1.5 hours longer to reach high camp than "it should have"—a total of about 4.5 hours. Ugh, that mountain is steeper and more difficult with each passing year!

High camp was made at the high point along the east ridge of Del Campo, overlooking Foggy Lake and out to the grandeur of the Monte Cristo Peaks and beyond. Throughout my time at high camp and the summit, I saw some pretty healthy showers form along the crest, perhaps even peppy/high enough for form thunderstorms, yet I remained dry and warm. It is so magical and powerful to see the interaction of the ocean and atmosphere (really, one and the same—google JISAO) with the landform, what with its incredible relief.

Indeed, I reflected back to 31 years before, and as I took in the views over the 43 hours at high camp, I realized and understood how I became hooked on the North Cascades. You see, Del Campo's moderate size (6,610') and position in the range (as noted, west) means that one has a great view to higher peaks all around, as well as the Puget lowlands and salt water. From here, the North Cascades really do present an aspect of "wave after wave of mountains as far as the eye can see." And not just humps—real, jagged, craggy snowy mountains. Set against sea level, even the moderate mountains such as the one I was on take on their true nature of great local relief. Awesome!

Less awesome was the amount of snow. Where there should have been meters-deep snow along the ridge, there was but a small patch right at camp. While I pitched my tent on a foot or more of snow Thursday, by Friday afternoon half of the tent was on bare ground/rock (a rather uncomfortable night that second night).

The summit offered some challenging climbing in terms of route finding and the climbing itself. The transition from snow to rock included a rather significant moat (where the snow melts away from the sun-warmed rock such that a gap forms, one that can easily swallow a person). The rock itself was delightfully solid, but frighteningly steep.

Phil and I parted company in a very lovely place, with craggy mountains all around, snowfields glittering in the sun, and overflowing tarns chuckling and splashing their way down the hill, on the way to giving life to all things in the verdant lands around and below. A very special honor indeed, and one for which I am humbled and thankful.

I ran into some nice people on the hike out. A guy named Chuck, clearly a kindred spirit, lamented about how society has become ruled by the "smart" phone, and how he wished everyone could see and experience the real world. A smart man! No fewer than 39 people and five dogs were on that trail, and based on the trail register, well over 200 people had been on the Weeden Creek trail/Gothic Basin since the start of May! All pages of the register were full on the day I arrived, so perhaps the visitation is closer to 300. People are getting out, which is nice. How much they're doing to advocate for the landscape appears to be a different story.

I am so thankful for the inclination and ability to do these explorations, but I see once again that there is no stopping the clock. I will continue to learn to modulate my exposure (literally)—at least I better—I want to keep visiting the hills!

Peaks of the Skykomish-Stillaguamish divide as seen from the summit of Del Campo include the Swauk Formation, Morning Star Peak, Vesper Peak, Sperry Peak and Big Four Mountain. Pilchuck, Whitehorse and Three Fingers are in the distance (L-R). —TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

American Alps update

Why establish a National Preserve in the North Cascades?

By Jim Davis and Marc Bardsley

When it comes to public lands, all too often we hear "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Are there any significant threats to our wild lands? Do we really need a new national preserve in the North Cascades? Should you support the American Alps Legacy Proposal?

YES!! National Park Service (NPS) management of public lands makes a huge difference for conservation. New extractive activities are forbidden on NPS lands and every effort is made to buyout or otherwise discourage existing extraction activities. NPS lands are managed for natural conditions, not multiple use (e.g., logging, mining, etc.), as mandated by Congress for Forest Service lands. Visitor enjoyment is a priority for NPS, but visitation is managed in a way that preserves natural conditions for future generations.

What does this mean for the lands that the American Alps Legacy Project seeks to designate as a national preserve? There's current evidence that mining, geothermal energy, small hydropower, and water storage are very real threats in the North Cascades.

Emerging threats to wild lands

Miners have long coveted lands within the American Alps proposal area east of Ross Lake and west of the Pacific Crest. There are more than 40 abandoned mines scattered throughout the area, some active mines right now, and the Forest Service has designated the area as high potential for future mining. The Flagg Mountain mining proposal above Mazama has brought the mining issue to the forefront for conservationists who love these wild remote lands. We need to act now, before a major commercial gold or copper mine is proposed in the American Alps area.

Most conservationists generally support geothermal energy production, as do we. It is one of the best energy sources compared to nearly all other commercially available alternatives. However, as with most industrial-scale extractive activities, the devil is in the details. The Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest has just completed an environmental assessment that provides a thumbs-up for

Miner's shack high on the headwaters of Canyon Creek-Skagit River.
—TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

Beyond this gate are superfund sites Azurite mine and Gold Hill mine, high on the Skagit River headwaters. —Tom Hammond photo

geothermal energy production leasing on more than 13,000 acres surrounding Mount Baker, including several thousand acres of wild lands within the American Alps proposal area. We can and should support geothermal energy production on appropriate lands (perhaps even those near Baker Lake Dam), but we should also take immediate action to preclude leasing of Forest Service lands that are much more appropriate for wildlife conservation and recreation.

Energy production from small hydropower facilities is also a significant threat on Forest Service lands in the North Cascades. Small hydropower was proposed recently for Swamp and Ruth Creeks in the upper North Fork Nooksack River watershed. Fortunately, the east coast company proposing the facilities withdrew its request, but other companies may take up an interest in these pristine watersheds or others in the American Alps proposal area. With a strong focus in the U.S. on alternative energy, it is almost certain that small hydropower will expand in the future.

Water storage dams on rivers and streams surrounding the North Cascades National Park are becoming a very real threat with this year's severe drought and climate change projections that show this year's conditions may become the norm. Water storage will likely become a very hot issue in the near future, especially in the Nooksack River and Skagit River watersheds. Fish conservationists are competing with farmers, developers, industry, and urban water systems for a limited and decreasing water supply during summer months. Some conservationists who want to keep enough water in streams and rivers for fish and other aquatic life may end up supporting compromise positions that store water from winter and spring rainfall for later release during the summer. The Yakima River basin may be the harbinger for the future of all watersheds in the North Cascades. We need to act now before pressure mounts for water storage dams in the American Alps area.

Mining, geothermal energy, small hydropower, and water storage are very real threats in the North Cascades.

Natural ecosystem management

Natural ecosystem management is also a strong suit for NPS. Fish and wildlife conservation is top high priority for NPS. Protection of native plants and pollinators is also a clear focus for NPS land managers.

NPS biologists are active in many fish and wildlife projects, but one species stands out above all others in the North Cascades. As you have certainly observed in multiple articles in *The Wild Cascades*, grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades has been an on-again/off-again proposition for more than 30 years. Through the very strong leadership of NPS (and specifically leadership at the North Cascades National Park), grizzly bear recovery is now on the front burner. NPS has provided the bulk of funding and staffing to conduct an environmental impact study of alternative strategies for grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades.

Conservation of native plants and pollinators is also important to NPS. Climate change is threatening natural environments that provide habitat for plants and pollinators in the North Cascades (i.e., subalpine meadows and natural forest openings with a high diversity of shrubs and annuals that provide pollen and nectar for bumble bees and other pollinators). NPS takes action to preserve and restore subalpine meadows that are threatened by excessive visitor use. NPS manages for natural fire regimes in backcountry areas, while also maintaining a strong focus on human safety and protection of facilities in front country areas. Without natural fire to create and maintain these habitats, tree encroachment will pinch out many subalpine meadows and growing trees will shade out diverse lower-story plants and pollinators.

The Forest Service has a strong commitment to protecting fish and wildlife and maintaining subalpine habitats, but it is hampered by its multiple use mandate that includes ecologically damaging activities such as controlling natural fires to protect timber resources, allowing placement of commercial honeybee hives in subalpine meadows when pollen and nectar sources are not available in agricultural areas, and agreeing to expansion of Mount Baker Ski Area parking lots at the expense of subalpine meadows.

The American Alps Legacy Project has been quietly working during the past year to address tribal treaty rights issues, clarify the threats of mining and energy development, build additional support among local residents, and expand conservation community support for the proposal. We look forward to designation of a new North Cascades National Preserve that will reduce the threat of extractive activities and enhance ecological management of the lands we love.

Cascades Rambles:
Green River and Charley Creek

By Rick McGuire

One of the better kept secrets in Washington state land conservation is the Department of Natural Resources' Natural Areas Program. Something around 150,000 acres in about 90 places have been set aside across the state in Natural Resource Conservation Areas (NRCAs) and Natural Area Preserves (NAPs.) What they may lack in size they often make up for in being places with unusual or rare ecotypes or habitats.

Both NRCAs and NAPs have ecosystem protection as their main goal. NRCAs tend to be bigger than NAPs and allow recreational use where it can be accommodated without diminishing natural values. NAPs are usually smaller and are intended to strictly protect some important natural feature or features. Recreational use is not encouraged in NAPs, and often they are not the type of places which would attract much public notice anyway.

My longtime status as a DNR "Forest Watch" volunteer recently earned me a rare opportunity to accompany some DNR employees on a trip to one of the least-known and visited of the NAPs, Charley Creek in the Green River watershed northeast of Enumclaw. Charley Creek NAP protects just under 2000 acres of unlogged native forest. Its location behind the locked gates of the Tacoma watershed makes it a lonely place, and all the more interesting for having been preserved strictly for its own sake, without so much as trace of foot trail or any other kind of recreational anything.

In common with just about everywhere in the South Cascades (south of I-90), the Green River has been hit hard by logging. Only fragments of natural forest survive. A few small patches hang on in the uppermost valley near Stampede Pass, and a few more some miles downvalley to the west, on the north side of the Kelly Butte Special Management Area, in the valleys of Sawmill, Lester and Rock creeks. Lester Creek probably has the most natural forest, bypassed because the trees are mostly smallish, post-fire regen, though with pockets of old growth where fires did not reach. Lester Creek has a superbly engineered Forest Service trail that climbs from near the ruins of the old railroad town of Lester up to the lookout on Kelly Butte. It is the kind of trail so perfectly graded that its 3800-foot elevation gain seems effortless. Or did, anyway, back in the days when it got cleared occasionally, something that probably hasn't happened in many years now.

Mark Boyer regards the "splendid corridor" of tall Douglas firs in NW basin of Charley Creek NAP. —KATIE WOOLSEY, DNR, PHOTO

The Kelly Butte Special Management Area was established by Congress when it legislated the "Plum Creek I-90" land exchange back in the year 2000. The only thing special about it is no logging, so the small remnant forests there are safe from that threat. Public access is allowed in the upper Green River valley, down as far as gates below the Lester townsite, where the city of Tacoma bars the way. The long approach over Stampede Pass and the lack of much in the way of attractions means that visitors are few. Railroad buffs occasionally go to see the route of the first railroad to cross the Cascades in 1887, and there is an impressive trestle across the Green, upstream from Lester. The rail route was unused and unmaintained for some years but was put back in service about 20 years ago.

The Charley Creek NAP, established in 2005, sits in the lower, restricted access part of the valley, just south of Tacoma's reservoir. Its main claims to fame are that it is the last chunk of natural, unlogged forest of any size for many miles in any direction, and that it sits far to the west, reaching down as low as 1400 feet in elevation.

I had been there once before, briefly, when I accompanied the previous DNR South Puget Sound natural areas manager on her annual inspection. The new natural areas manager was trying to become familiar with the various areas she is responsible for, thus providing a rare second chance for me (as an "expert" who had been there before) to get into the watershed and further explore Charley Creek.

The Charley Creek NAP is basically an area that the loggers didn't get to as they liquidated the forests everywhere else in the Green. It could be called "odds and ends," at least as it appears on the map, which shows no one obvious way to go in and out. It does not protect any complete watersheds. Charley Creek upstream from the NAP has been thoroughly logged and the side drainages also have roads at their heads, so most of the creeks have been blown out to some extent. It is not perfect, but in today's imperfect, heavily logged world it stands out as an attractive place.

What Charley Creek has is some very nice natural unlogged forest. Estimates of its age seem to vary, but it is something on the order of 150 years old. Much of the lower and middle Green River valley, and the adjacent Greenwater valley to its south, seem to have been swept by fires sometime around the middle of the 19th century. Charley Creek's forest might be termed "young old growth." It is not the classic big tree "pumpkin patch" old

growth, which takes something like 400 or so years to grow in most of western Washington. The trees at Charley are quite tall in places, but usually not more than 4 feet in diameter, maybe 5 on the very best sites. They are still growing, still relative youngsters in tree years.

It is almost a miracle that they have survived. Forests like those at Charley are very valuable in terms of lumber and dollars. The pumpkin patches may have more impressive individual trees, but they also have a high percentage of rot or "defect," unlike the younger forests at Charley, which are full of clear, sound wood, probably more than 100,000 board feet per acre. Back in the day, forests like those at Charley sometimes did not seem that impressive to many tree huggers, who preferred the 500-year-old forests of giant trees. But there is not much natural forest left these days, and tree huggers can't be so choosy anymore. And forests like Charley's are growing and becoming more impressive year by year.

Charley Creek stands out as the very last place with low-elevation natural forests in a heavily logged part of the Cascades.

Visiting the forest

On my previous visit we had dropped down from a logging road along the eastern edge of the NAP and traversed over and around Beaverdam Lake, which sits on a relatively flat bench near the middle of the NAP. This time we entered the bottom end of the NAP from a logging road along lower Charley Creek, in order to see the lowest elevation forest and to traverse into the basin of a tributary creek on the northwest side of the NAP.

Lower Charley Creek did not disappoint. After walking up the old road through typical ho-hum second growth, it was a simple matter of stepping off the road and walking a few feet to enter splendid unlogged forest. Tall, straight Douglas firs covered the slopes, with just a few cedars and hemlocks mixed in. Walking was easy and mostly brush free, with only some fallen trees to slow us down. As we had suspected, there were some older trees, survivors of the last fire, somewhat bigger in diameter than the others but mostly distinguished by larger, gnarlier branches. It takes a long time, usually three to four hundred years or more, for Douglas firs to develop big, muscular limbs.

We traversed the sideslopes of the lower Charley valley for a ways through this appealing forest. Since we wanted to see the ridgetop and the NW basin, we started climbing toward the west. As we left the lower slopes the trees gradually became smaller. It was only about a 1200 foot climb but seemed longer. Most of the upper slopes had trees maybe 2 feet in diameter, with very little growing beneath them, easy to walk through other than being a bit steep in spots. A whole culture has grown up in some pseudo-forestry circles, claiming that such forests are "depauperate" ("lacking in numbers of varieties of species")—that they are a problem in need of fixing. Just why they are a problem is never really explained, but it is a handy justification for logging jobs in places like the supposedly "protected" Cedar River watershed. The reality is that it is an entirely natural state for forests to go through, and not any kind of problem needing fixing.

We topped out on the airy and cool 2600-foot high ridge, under tall slender trees, with what looked to be easy walking in all directions. After a pause for lunch we started dropping down the other side into the northwest basin, which looked like it had big trees on the aerial photos. It didn't take long for the trees to get bigger as we descended, and soon the terrain flattened out into the basin. What a contrast with the dry ridgeline. The deeper soils and more plentiful moisture of the basin made it a land of giant trees in comparison. In one place we walked along a splendid corridor of tall straight Douglas firs, almost 5 feet in diameter, probably about as big and tall and impressive as trees can possibly get in 150 years. We did not see any obvious survivors from the previous forest like we had found in lower Charley, but there were a number of what we all agreed were the biggest, most amazingly picturesque snags we had ever seen, some so big that they supported miniature forests on top.

We started seeing some wide-spreading maples, along with a few cedars and even a few tall, bluish needled noble firs, growing at a lower elevation here than normal. It all seemed so lush in comparison with the ridgetop forest, it was hard to believe it was all the same age, but apparently it is, the only difference being the better-growing sites in the basin producing big trees much faster than the upper slopes. The brush was thicker in places, the walking more difficult, but we had found what we had hoped to find, a forest that was a delight to wander through. We zigzagged our way through it, not wanting to miss any of it.

Sadly, we started seeing stumps, and found ourselves back in second-growth forest. It is a recurring theme in Cascade walks. When one descends into big tree forest, logged areas are usually not far below. We knew we would run into logged area, but still it came sooner than we hoped, and it was not a welcome sight. Maybe if we had taken a line farther to the west, we would have been able to see more of the unlogged basin. As it was, we were able to get back into unlogged forest by leaving the valley bottom and traversing as high as possible as we headed back east toward Charley Creek.

At one point we came out on a talus slope that offered a view north out to Tacoma's reservoir. After more traversing through alternating old-growth and second-growth forest, we spotted a small pond below that seemed to warrant a look. Beavers had built a small but tall dam, maybe 6 feet high, in a narrow slot, forming a stagnant-looking pond (this was not the "Beaverdam Lake" in the middle of the NAP) of maybe an acre or so in size. We couldn't help joking about how it looked as though a few well-placed kicks would result in an instant waterfall and no more yucky-looking pond, but we of course left the work of our state's largest rodents in peace.

A couple more minutes of walking found us back on the old logging road we had walked up earlier in the day, and a few minutes more back to the car, and the long drive back out through watershed gates and toward North Bend. The consensus seemed to be that if we ever returned, the route to take would be an exploration of the flatter slopes and benches near the center of the NAP around Beaverdam Lake, and maybe dropping down into the Charley valley from there and following it down to the bottom of the NAP where we had started our trip that day.

Back when old forests were plentiful, Charley Creek might not have stood out much. But with everything else now cut, it really stands out as the very last place with low elevation natural forests in that heavily logged part of the Cascades. We are lucky that it was saved just in time, and even if I never go there again, just knowing it is there is worth a lot.

The Corvid's eye

By the time the corvid first met Bonnie Phillips in the waning years of the 20th century, her days of rugged exploration through the Northwest wilds and beyond were already long past. Bonnie's younger years, as she related, were not without their considerable montane accomplishments. Her travels through the thick of enveloping forests and thin of rarified alpine air changed her, shaped her as they have done to so many of us. Bonnie continued to draw from these early experiences for the remainder of her recently completed life – the great majority of which was devoted to a hyper-charged conservation ethic and corresponding, relentless activism on behalf of our public forests.

In her later years, more often than not, Bonnie relied on her wheelchair to get around, though the corvid retains rich memories of two days in particular with her, ambling through the sky-tickling Douglas firs of the eastern Olympic Peninsula on both occasions. During the first of these outings, in 2001, Bonnie's health was riding a temporary upswing. She and a close mutual friend were hankering for some time in the deep woods. And so we set out to Lena Lake on an unusually quiet day for that busy trail. Relaxing by the lakeshore later that afternoon, while watching the resident ospreys terrorize the trout, the seeds of the Olympic Forest Coalition were sown. OFCO, as the group came to be known, burned brightly for as long as Bonnie was able to lead it, and was an effective, countervailing force to the popular nonsense of "restoration thinning."

A few years later, by then able to walk only a limited number of steps unassisted on most days, several of us accompanied Bonnie up the old Dosewallips River road; beyond its massive washout that, thirteen years in, still ensures a car-free peace for much of the middle valley. Sometimes pushed by her friends and occasionally indulging in a short "sprint" on her wheels, Bonnie marveled at this opportunity to immerse herself in wild forest without the soul-deadening presence of automobiles. As much as anyone, Bonnie is responsible for the fact that one may still hike to and linger at Dosewallips Falls without risk of getting run over. Roosevelt elk migrating up and down this canyon, with their long memories, must also feel some gratitude over the absence of their vehicular harassers. Should the cosmic winds allow, Bonnie might now travel with these great ungulates along their ancient routes.

Prior to focusing her conservation efforts in the Olympics, of course, Bonnie was a formidable defender of the North Cascades, particularly through her Pilchuck Audubon work. Never one to mince words or pull punches, Bonnie was in many respects the antidote to the let's-make-a-deal, money-chasing, glad-handing sickness that infects so many formerly admirable organizations. Indeed, while the big greens fretted nervously over their relationships with politicians and funders, Bonnie and a cadre of grassroots conservationists filed the lawsuit that in 1991 would dramatically alter timber management practices on the Northwest's national forests, following on the heels of the spotted owl listing. One might posit that no other event has been as pivotal in saving our mature forests from the chainsaws and bulldozers. It was and is a gift for a generation. As Bonnie herself told the *Seattle Times* a few months prior to Judge Dwyer's ruling: "You feel that something very historically important is about to happen. You get to feel, in a small way, you're a part of it."

Access was obviously a challenge for Bonnie, for as long as the corvid knew her. She craved contact with the forests she worked so long and hard to protect, though getting to them was never an easy task. The scent of conifers in a light breeze, the soft roar of cascading snowmelt, the distant call of the varied thrush, and kaleidoscopic patterns of the forest understory were often elusive to Bonnie during the second half of her life. Yet know them she did. What's more, Bonnie realized intuitively that far bigger forces are in play in our wild forests than in the near-term wants of any individual – or even the Homo sapiens species itself (which she viewed, regretfully, as "failed"). The priority it seemed, for Bonnie, was to allow these forces to fulfill their natural promise and destiny, with as little interference as possible, and preferably with no interference at all. Such is the fountain of life from which Bonnie tasted and understood, as a thoughtful and observant person might.

So look to the wild forests that remain, friends, and then to those forests ably recovering from previous assaults on their constitution and character. The wisdom of the world and its near-infinite possibilities are all still to be found there. Forget not the first rule of respectful access, though, which is simply to do no harm. And having achieved that, what greater privilege and fulfillment of life's energies might there be than to defend it? Bonnie, we shall miss you.

Remembering Bonnie Phillips

By Rick McGuire

Washington forests have lost one of their most dedicated and effective defenders with the recent death of Bonnie Phillips. Bonnie was not usually associated with any one particular place or group of places in the way that many forest advocates are. Her canvas was the entire landscape of Washington state and beyond. There may be more trees still standing, trees that otherwise would have been cut but live on, thanks to Bonnie, than can be said of probably any other individual in the history of our state.

I first got to know Bonnie when I was working on the campaign to protect the Boulder River Wilderness in the run-up to the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act. Bonnie was a volunteer with Pilchuck Audubon Society, and she and her husband Curt Howard lived out in the then-rural northwest corner of Snohomish County, in an inviting custom house built from old-growth wood that Curt had salvaged, ironically, from an old sawmill. There were of course multiple bird feeders, and I was always a bit jealous that juncoes would land on Bonnie's feeders but would never come directly to an almost identical one I had in Seattle.

I remember Bonnie the active climber and explorer of wild places. With her aerobic look, blonde hair, and very light, almost transparent, porcelain blue eyes (though no two people would probably ever agree on their color), Bonnie was very much the bonnie lass. She had the kind of beauty that is embellished by liveliness, insightfulness, and curiosity about the world.

The 1984 act protected a million acres in Washington, but outside the Wilderness areas, things were grim. Many of the Wilderness areas were notably lacking in forests, and the taxpayer-funded liquidation of old-growth, ancient forests was moving faster and faster. Endless parades of logging trucks, each one with just a few giant logs, rolled down every highway from every National Forest every working day. It was easy to see that if it continued, there would soon be nothing left. Bonnie became increasingly involved in efforts to stop the destruction, including the first efforts to map old growth. I spent as much time as I could exploring the remaining forests up and down the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest. We often compared notes and looked at maps.

Bonnie was not intimidated, and she had the courage to act.

Every forest that we found was slated for destruction. Every one of them.

Congress had passed a number of laws in years past to protect things like species viability across their ranges on the National Forests, and much else. These laws were routinely ignored by the Forest Service in its drive to cut everything. Bonnie, along with other activists at Pilchuck such as Kathy Johnson, Susie Schaefer and Bill Lider, decided it was time to act. A lawsuit was filed against the "Olo Too" timber sale, located just outside the newly established Boulder River Wilderness. This was a very big step at the time, a direct challenge to business as usual, and it really got peoples' attention.

I wish I could say I was at the forefront of those urging action, but I wasn't. I had the kind of relationship with our then 2nd district Congressman, who had sponsored the Boulder River effort, where if I called, he would answer. Such people don't take the kind of dramatic steps to upset the apple cart like Bonnie and Pilchuck took with Olo Too. How many times had we heard that if we pushed too hard, if we brought things to a head, the timber industry would respond by crushing us entirely? That they would wipe us out by pushing some kind of "hard release" bill through Congress overriding all other laws and mandating heavy cutting everywhere on the National Forests outside of Wilderness areas?

Bonnie had heard all those scary threats, but she didn't believe them. There was no public desire to see the National Forests sacrificed to the timber industry – quite the opposite. The almighty timber industry turned out to be a paper tiger. The Olo Too case was easily won in court (the trees still stand), but more importantly the cause of protecting forests on public lands went on to win in the court of public opinion. Olo Too established some very important case law, and it didn't take long for others to use it to oppose other, equally destructive timber sales, and to build on it. All of the Forest Service's plans to cut down all of the public's forests were suddenly thrown into doubt. A chain reaction followed, which ultimately led to the adoption of the Northwest Forest Plan. It all started with Bonnie urging legal action against Olo Too.

Unlike so many others, Bonnie was not intimidated, and she had the courage to act. I can't help but think of all those wonderfully forested places up and down the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, places like Grotto and Miller River on the Skykomish, Lennox Creek on the Snoqualmie, "Lucky Son" (named after a stopped timber sale) on the Cascade River, all those places and many more, that today would be logged-over acres had Bonnie and Pilchuck Audubon not had the courage to move against the juggernaut.

Bonnie went on to do much more for forests, even after a sometimes painful nerve condition kept her from hiking as she once did. Nothing and nobody fooled her, and I never knew her to believe or pretend to believe anything just because it

Continued on page 19

A scientist's emotional evaluation of the "winter" past

By Tom Hammond

Any real planetary or climate scientist will say that neither a single weather event such as a huge storm nor even a given season can be used as an indisputable example or direct evidence of global climate change (aka "global warming"). The sample size is too small, and the number of feedback mechanisms too great and complex for such a facile conclusion.

In this context allow me to correlate some personal observations and news articles over the past "winter" to tell a less scientific, more emotional story of climate change seen in a single season. In my personal experience living in the Pacific Northwest for 50+ years, we tend to get one or two big rain and wind events (lately called "atmospheric rivers", commonly known in these parts as "pineapple express") in the fall, and perhaps as late as December. During the 2014-15 season we had at least four such events, including events in January, February and even March, when Seattle set a new one-day rain total of 2.2 inches!

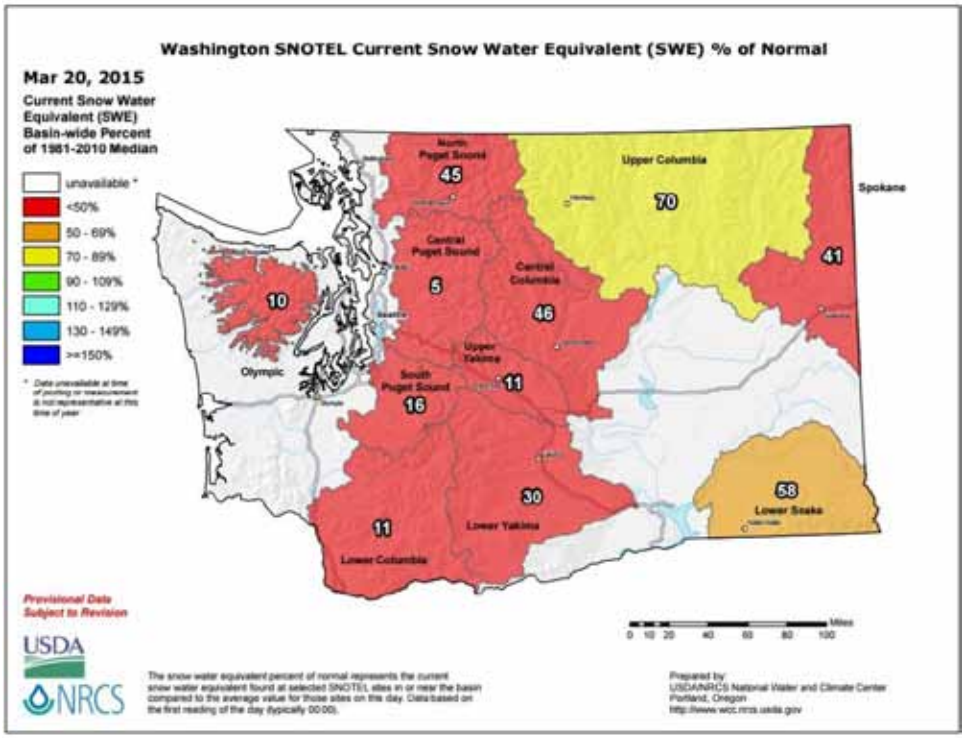
At the same time, snowpack around the state, as measured by the all-important "snow water equivalent" (SWE) was perilously low, with the Olympic Mountains and most areas of the Cascades reporting between 5-15 percent of historic normal, while the North Cascades from DaKobed (Glacier Peak) north come in around 45 percent. More telling is the fact that records are being set not just in our state, but across the entirety of North America, and indeed, the world. Mashable.com reports 3,829 record-setting daily high temperatures in the U.S., while parts of Alaska in late February saw temperatures of 56 degrees F. Seattle has set at least seven high temperature records, including 61 degrees F on December 9 and 72 degree F on April 20. Snowpack in California was less than 5 percent of typical SWE, and water rationing is now mandatory. All of this while the East coast of North America experienced some of the most intense and severe winter storms since Europeans settled on this continent, setting many snowfall records.

As well, flora bloomed early—in some cases six weeks early. Daphne bloomed in late January, and the cherry trees on the UW campus some three weeks earlier than my direct experience over 30 years on the campus. Even the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival set a record, with fields beginning to bloom March 19, the earliest in festival history.

By May 9, the north fork of the Cascade River was snow-free below 5,500 (including the normally full avalanche fans). Indeed, in the 24 hours I was below Cascade Pass, I did not see a single avalanche! The road to Artists Point between Kulshan (Mount Baker) and Mount Shuksan opened on May 14—the earliest ever opening, by more than four weeks—at the officially recognized "snowiest place in the world"! Highway 20 opened April 3, the fourth earliest opening since it was completed in 1972. And now, as July begins, and per visits to Del Campo and the British Columbia Coast Range, it is evident snow melt, flora and fauna are all four to six weeks ahead of schedule—that is, it is like mid-August out there.

Meanwhile, the western Pacific Ocean has experienced some of the most intense storms on (human) record, and at a higher frequency than usually seen. At least three such "Super Typhoons" have struck the Philippines and Vanuatu.

In a misguided effort at grandstanding, science denier Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) brought a snowball in to the Senate chambers to demonstrate that the world is plenty cold. Someone should remind the good senator that it's called GLOBAL climate change for a reason, and the shared reality is that our planet is driven by physics, not politics, and the Earth, Sun, and everything else does not orbit around "the other Washington".



Bonnie Phillips

Continued from page 17

might be convenient or politically expedient to have it be true. She instantly saw through the hoax of "restoration logging". On a number of occasions we went out looking at the godawful messes resulting from Forest Service thinning sales, which had been promoted as "accelerating the development of old-growth characteristics." I remember Bonnie saying "how on Earth can anyone fool themselves into thinking that this is doing any kind of good?"

Bonnie and I once had a mutual conservationist acquaintance who was building what later became a very profitable business. He was full of enthusiasm about how he and other financially successful people he was meeting would be able to pour money into conservation, and how that would buy all sorts of good things. This was when the number of paid conservationists in Washington state could about be counted on one hand. Bonnie was not excited by the prospect of money flooding into the conservation movement, and was quite skeptical as to whether it would do any good. Her instincts seem to have been correct. The money part happened alright, the good things, not so much. It sometimes seems that the more money and paid employees an organization has, the less real conservation work gets done.

Bonnie never tried to get anything for herself out of conservation work. Although she was paid a small salary for some years as Executive Director of the Olympic Forest Coalition, she was really a volunteer. Perhaps she ended up giving too much of herself to the cause of forest conservation, doing so much over so many years. Bonnie would have scoffed at the notion of being a martyr to the cause she cared so much about, but maybe if she had given just a little less to the forests and a little more to Bonnie Phillips, she might still be with us.

A quarter century has passed since the epic victories in which Bonnie played such a large role. Northwest forests and the Northwest Forest Plan are again under attack. In an echo from the past, some are saying that if we don't appease the timber industry by offering up more timber volume from the National Forests, they could come in and simply take it all. I doubt that Bonnie would agree. Let's hope that today's conservationists will stand up the way she did, and work together to protect those many thousands of acres of forests that might now be stumps had Bonnie not had the courage to act.

THE WILD CASCADES
Journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council
Post Office Box 95980
University Station
Seattle, Washington 98145-2980

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Mt. Shuksan from Heather Meadows, original watercolor by Dee Molenaar, 1963. Patrick Goldsworthy collection.